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ABSTRACT

An ethnographic pilot study explored mentor/protege relationships within the corporate setting of a consumer pharmaceutical firm to determine how minorities were affected. An unstructured interview format was used with 17 individuals in 4 groups: white and Afro-American, male and female. Interviews focused around the history and advantages of mentor/protege relationships. Mentors served three roles: teacher, advisor, and critic. Characteristics of a good mentor were good interpersonal skills, professionalism, legitimacy, and exemplary leadership skills. Mentors looked for certain characteristics in potential proteges--interpersonal skills, motivation, attitude, and intelligence. Optimum conditions had to be present for mentor/protege relationships to develop fully. Continued contact after the conclusion of a work assignment or when formal interaction had ended signaled the start of a genuine mentorship. Racism, sexism, and other prejudices posed barriers for minorities and females when they tried to attract a mentor. Intraracial in-fighting exacerbated the problem created by the shortage of available mentors. Mentors were able to influence proteges to stay by helping them assimilate, offering encouragement, and providing help. Orientation seminars for new employees, seminars for management, and improved performance appraisal systems were recommended. (Appendixes contain interview questions and 16 references.) (YLB)

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# MINORITIES AND MENTORING, A CLOSER LOOK

Jerusalem T. Howard

November 27, 1991

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## Introduction

### Historical Perspective

A corporation is formed by business associates to conduct a business venture and divide profits among investors. Also, a corporation also has a charter, is guided by a board of directors and has centralized management. There are additional characteristics of a corporation. For example, in order for a corporation to rank in the Fortune 500 they must meet certain criteria based on their performance in the following areas: sales, profits, assets, stockholder's equity, market value, earnings per share, and total return to investors (Fortune, p. 367). The companies that make up the Fortune 500 are America's largest industrial corporations and make up what is commonly known as Corporate America. Currently holding its rank at number forty-seven among the Fortune 500, McNeil CPC a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson is definitely a member of Corporate America (Fortune, p. 346).

Not unlike other companies in this group, Corporate America is run by a group of homogeneous white males. Minority representation in corporations is sparse. Whites hold the power positions and key leadership roles within most organizations. With this power base they have been able to develop and to maintain control. One way whites have been able to perpetuate their dominance in leadership positions is through mentorships. That is senior level managers groom younger executives to fill positions that will eventually be vacated by the older mentor. Mentorships aid in the development and promotability of employees within an organization.

Until minorities and females entered the workforce, this system has remained basically unchecked. Prior to 1960 those minorities entering Corporate America had little impact because they did not have the necessary critical mass to affect the existing power structure. Lacking knowledge of how the mentor system operates in Corporate America, minorities were not able to advance within an organization and their professional development was stymied. Those few that were successful during this time period were able to do by assimilating into the white culture.



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As America changed its values during the 1960s so did Corporate America. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (CRA Act) opened the door for minorities to get a fair chance and become a full participant in what America had to offer. This meant being a part of and reaping the benefits of being employed by Corporate America. The CRA Act enabled more Blacks to be hired by corporations who previously did not have an open door to them. As more and more Blacks were employed the Black middle class emerged. During the same time, what can been seen as a boon to minorities, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) gradually gained enough power to bring suit against corporations who did not open opportunities to minorities (Davis p. 3). Although the CRA Act and the emergence of the EEOC helped minorities gain admittance into companies there were additional obstacles that had to be overcome. Minorities faced the problem of advancing in a system that favored the white male. White males were in the best position to be mentors. Using a de facto mentoring system whites held the power positions and were able to develop and to promote other whites. Advancement by minorities was limited by not only an absence of mentors but also by a lack of understanding of how the mentor system works.

Despite the relative gains minorities had during the 1960s, during the late nineteen seventies "conservative values began to pervade the entire society" (Davis, p. 46). What was once an open door to opportunity slowly began to close for minorities pursuing corporate careers. Political and economic factors worked to the disadvantage of minorities. For example, during the first year of the Reagan administration certain corporations no longer had to have detailed plans of hiring and promoting females and minorities. Also during Reagan's administration employment rules were changed making it more difficult for minorities to sue and to collect back pay for jobs or promotions they did not get. In addition, legislation was passed that prevented employers with government contracts from hiring women and minorities over equally qualified whites even to make up for the effects of past discrimination. These political constraints were accompanied by harsh economic times. The poor economic conditions, double digit inflation, and high unemployment caused competition to become more intense and "charity" from Corporate America began to dissolve.

As America moved from the seventies into the eighties, corporations became more diverse than they have ever been before. This diversity can be

McNeil CPC being a member of the Johnson & Johnson Family of companies is a typical company in Corporate America. That is it is characterized by being run by the white majority, having some minority representation, and struggling with diversity issues. Since its inception as an affiliate in 1982, Mc Neil CPC has not done much to address how diversity will affect the company. Management development has not been a critical concern until recently. In late 1989 the first director level training position was established. This signaled the initial steps to respond to the management training issues. Currently, courses are available to handle the challenges of diversity. Training must be embraced and supported by upper management for it to yield significant results. Also, training must trickle down to the lowest level of management. In addition to training seminars, the company is investigating implementing mentoring programs.

The role and importance of mentors was touched upon briefly in the preceding pages. However, as a part of an overall strategy, mentoring must be examined carefully. What are the characteristic of mentor and protege? How do these relationships begin? What are some barriers minorities face, and how does mentoring affect a company?

The purpose of this paper is to address these questions and to provide some solutions in response to the challenges that organizations face when dealing with the matter of diversity.

## Chapter I

## Literature Review/Problem Description

A review of current literature about mentors is the most appropriate starting point for my project. Much of the literature covers the basic functions and roles of mentors. Other articles treat how mentorships began and are sustained. A great deal has been published on the problems of cross-gender mentoring. However, the problems associated with minorities and mentorships have not been fully discussed.

Broadly defined, a mentor is a person within an organization who takes a personal interest in and guides another person or persons through a particular stage in his or her career (Roche, p. 15). Teaching, counseling, and sponsoring an individual are a few functions that mentors serve (Hurley, p. 42). As a teacher, a mentor can provide the protege with technical expertise to solve problems, offer assistance with complex work-related projects, and give advice on how to work around difficult political issues that arise in the organization. As a counselor, the mentor educates the protege with regard to an organization's social norms, values, and expectations. In this role, the mentor can also give emotional support to the protege. When the protege becomes distressed or loses confidence the mentor can be a source of encouragement. Counseling can help bolster the protege's self-esteem. The mentor's sponsorship role is important when promotional opportunities arise for the protege. Through the mentor's efforts and public advocacy a protege may be advanced and given additional responsibility (Zey, p. 7).

Entering into a mentor/protege relationship requires action by both parties. An examination of management succession at the Jewell Company's mentor/protege relationships has provided important insight. The company had a philosophy of "assisting the people down the line to be successful" (Collins, p. 90). Upper management took an active role in initiating the relationships. However, in most instances, the "protege is actually in control of the relationship, since wisdom can be imparted only when receivers seek it" (Woodlands Group, p. 920).

Differences exist across race and gender lines make developing mentor/protege relationships easy for some and difficult for others. In the majority of organizations white males do not face obstacles such as cultural bias, risks of intimacy, and damaging gossip that females face. Cultural upbringing is one obstacle that females face when trying to establish a mentor/protege relationship. White males in a de facto sense are in the best position and most capable to be mentors. Mary Cook writes that white males have been conditioned "to see women as wives, mothers, and sweethearts, but not executive peers" (Cook, p. 83). Not being perceived as a professional equal puts females in a difficult position because mentors may not want to lose prestige, power, or influence by having a female protege. Mentor/protege and other "developmental relationships generally encourage closer internal relationships" (Clawson, p. 25). Managing the intimacy associated with the relationship is another roadblock that females must contend with. James Clawson and Kathy Kram discussed internal and external relationships and the appropriate level of intimacy needed for productivity and development. The internal relationship concerns the mentor and the protege. The external relationship deals with how other co-workers perceive the mentor/protege alliance (Clawson, p. 24-26). As both parties spend time together a closeness develops and the relationship can lead to sexual liaisons and undesired professional growth. Individuals who are external to this relationship, will often see the unproductive intimacy, correctly as favoritism and distrust both mentor and protege. These possibilities for the female are great hindrances when trying to develop a mentorship.

On the opposite end of the intimacy spectrum is unproductive distance. Operating at distances that lack the appropriate level of intimacy results in a less than desired professional development for the protege. Also, the members of the external environment may reinforce any existing prejudices (Clawson, p. 25). For example, if a female is assigned a high visibility assignment other workers may perceive this as favoritism on the boss' part. Further, if workers harbor the belief that women get special attention, any additional developmental time that a boss may give to a worker could be misconstrued. The challenge that exists in mentoring between women and men involves balancing internal and external relationships while utilizing the appropriate level of

intimacy. Managing these relationships is a formidable tasks for women and men.

The above paragraphs have addressed the current issues and trends surrounding the mentor phenomenon. With these as a backdrop, my project will explore mentor/protege relationships. Specifically, the mentor's role within our organization will be examined. Characteristics of both mentors and proteges will be addressed as well as how mentorships begin. Key issues concerning barriers that minorities face when entering into a mentor/protege relationship will show that problems exist. Another area that will be addressed is the impact of mentoring on an organization. Finally, the relationship between a boss and mentor will be explored.

Problem Description

The problems brought about by the lack of mentorships adversely affect the productivity and operation of our organization. When newly hired employees do not adequately assimilate into the work environment a feeling of isolation and abandonment can begin to take hold. From here the worse cases result in a premature termination of employment. Those employees who manage to persevere through the internal politics, subtle racism, and other discrimination, are also likely destined for frustration and termination without help of a mentor. What exacerbates the problem is that females and blacks cannot, typically, for whatever reason, reap the benefits that a mentor can provide. Mentors serve a teaching function for proteges. This helps accelerate the learning process for some. Those who do not have a mentor must learn and develop at a rate often many times slower than their mentored peers. Serving as an advisor, a mentor can guide an individual through the intricacies that pervade corporate life. Without such guidance one may unknowingly hamper one's progression within the organization. Without valuable feedback that a mentor can provide individuals will repeatedly make mistakes. This, without a doubt, hurts one's opportunities for advancement. The advantages of having a mentor could go on indefinitely.

However, my point is that when mentor/protege relationships exist there are better developmental opportunities available. The converse also holds true.



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When a disproportionate number of minorities fail to develop mentor relationships, the problem is not only one of not achieving operational effectiveness, but also one of not realizing fairness and equality that is embodied in the Credo. The Credo serves as the company's guiding philosophy. It outlines management tenants that are embodied by the corporation. Also, it establishes the relationship that the corporation has with its customers, employees, and share holders.

The methods, issues and approaches learned from the Dynamics of Organization seminars has enabled me to analyze the mentoring problem and their impact on the organization. As companies begin to reduce the number of employees and streamline operations allocating resources becomes more important. To operate efficiently and effectively human resources, just as other resources, must be positioned to provide the largest return. Fostering and promoting mentorships is one way the organization can prepare to meet anticipated shortages in qualified professionals.

Understanding how individuals in an organization interact and why they sometimes do not, were two key things that I needed to understand before my research could begin. Examining the organization from a psychological and sociological context enabled me to identify the rationale for human behavior as well as its motivation. When comparing company corporate culture, I found ethnographic research techniques invaluable.

Deciding on the most appropriate strategy for promoting mentor/protege relationships and getting such a program to work are two tasks that lie ahead. It is hoped that, applying appropriate decision making techniques in business will enable me to select the most appropriate strategy given the peculiar environmental conditions. All in all, the Dynamics of Organization seminars individually have provided the skills and techniques that were used to develop proposals for the solutions to the problems of mentoring.

## Chapter II

## Research Methodology

This ethnographic pilot study was designed to explore mentor/protege relationships within a corporate setting of a consumer pharmaceutical firm. The purpose of the research was to gather data within an organizational setting and to determine how minorities are affected, positively or negatively, by mentoring relationships. Through my research, I will attempt to see how my findings compare and confirm previously published concepts and principles about mentoring. Hopefully, my research will expose and bring to light other areas that warrant further exploration. An unstructured interview format similar to the one that John Lofland describes in his work Analyzing Social Settings, Wadsworth, Inc., 1984, p.12, was selected for use in this study. Since the research focused on eliciting individual's experiences this data gathering technique was ideal. Also, this interview format afforded participants with the greatest opportunity for input. The population of the study included four different groups - Whites (male and female) and Afro-American (male and female). Seventeen individuals comprised the sample size. The largest group from which to draw participants from was obviously the white male population. Selecting and identifying these employees, was a rather simple task. However, sourcing candidates from the other groups was more difficult. I eventually interviewed five black males which represented a vast majority of that particular population. Females, black and white, were equally difficult to sample because of the small group from which to draw. By selecting and interviewing participants from four different groups, I was readily able to compare and contrast experiences as they varied across race and sex lines. The composition of the group cut across all functional areas. The selection criteria that I used included: race, gender, position within company, longevity with the company, and number of years business experience. The selected participants also had similar educational backgrounds and level of compensation. Senior level executives were selected because they were most likely to have had a mentor and they would be in a position to have a protege (see Appendix A).

The interviews focused around the history and the advantages of



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mentor/protege relationships. Also there were miscellaneous questions asked to cover other areas of mentorships. The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

After the interviews were conducted each subject's response was examined. My findings were based on the collective responses from all participants for each particular question. For example, one question asks "How did the mentor/protege relationship began?" I examined everyone's answer to this question and drew conclusions based on how the entire group answered it. This process continued until all the survey questions were summarized. In effect the findings were based on the entire population of the study. Those questions that seemed to overlap as well as those that did not have adequate responses were eliminated from the study (see Appendix C).

## Chapter III
## The Mentor

### A. A Mentor's Role

Within the organization mentors served at times as teachers and advisors, while at other times they provided constructive criticism and publicly advocated promotions for their proteges. Although there are many other roles mentors fill, these four were the most prevalent in my pilot study and consequently will be examined further. As a teacher, mentors were instrumental in helping their protege assimilate to the new work environment. This included explaining the unwritten norms, the political structure, and the social systems within the organization. Further, mentored proteges have claimed that "learning about the corporate culture was critical to functioning" within the organization. An example, is a young account representative, "Emma" was thrust into a male dominated marketing morass. She came to the company with an excellent educational background and a strong desire to succeed in her chosen profession. Her first extended business trip was filled with many new and difficult situations that she had not experienced before. At her admission, she "did not know the social ins and outs". Because of this she felt uncomfortable in some settings and less than competent in others. A senior level manager "took her under his wing and gave [her] advice on social matters". He explained to her appropriate topics to discuss, he suggested restaurants to frequent, and he told her ways to get out of possible compromising situations. These tutoring sessions lasted for approximately six months. After this time, "Emma" felt confident and better prepared to handle herself professionally and socially. This is a typical example of how a mentor can help educate a protege. In addition to assisting with assimilation into the work environment, the education process was ongoing and can cover basic business skills such as decision making and negotiating skills as well as practical matters including the appropriate interpersonal style to use when attempting to influence others.

When a mentor serves as an advisor, proteges were able to call on their mentor for assistance when resolving political situations. "Sam" was

bright and ambitious. He quickly surpassed his peers in terms of managerial responsibility. However, in his usual aggressive manner, "Sam" not knowingly offended a very senior level manager. This could have been disastrous for "Sam" and would have signaled the end of his fast climb within the organization. Knowing that he had erred, "Sam" turned to his mentor for advise. His mentor calmly gave him "inside" information about that person's personality and told him how to positively channel his aggressiveness. With this, "Sam" made amends and continued along his promising career path. Also, providing strategies on how best to handle conflict with one's peers and boss was another way mentors fulfilled an advisory role. Often proteges sought insight when preparing for presentations and various other business duties. Mentors served their advisorial capacity when they acted as a "sounding board" for their protege's ideas and other thoughts. Providing honest "non-threatening" feedback that enables one to improve performance was a key factor that proteges stated enabled them to perform well.

Having an unbiased, yet supportive, critic also helped prevent proteges from getting too discouraged when things did not go as planned. "Dan" thought his first department meeting went well because he contributed suggestions, answered when required, and was attentive. At the end of the meeting, "Dan's" mentor pulled him aside and briefed his performance. Except for being attentive, his mentor was not pleased. His mentor critiqued his suggestions as not "being thought through thoroughly given other upcoming projects". "Dan" agreed. During the meeting, when asked a specific question, "Dan" calmly answered. However, his mentor told him that he "should not have quoted people who were not in attendance". This may not only result in a misquote, but also is considered bad corporate form. After hearing these criticisms, "Dan" felt badly because he thought he had contributed in a positive manner. His mentor reassured him that there would be other meetings in which to improve. This is one example of how a mentor can serve a role as a critic.

The final and most important role that a mentor has is that of public advocacy for his or her protege. When promotional opportunities arise, and highly visible projects are offered, one's mentor is instrumental in lobbying for his/her candidate. Without having someone speaking up for them one misses

out on opportunities that are necessary for success in the organization.

In sum, the mentor's role as teacher and advisor helps the protege assimilate and develop professionally within a particular organization. As a critic, the mentor helps the protege hone his/her skills. Finally, as a public advocate, a mentor can secure advancement and career growth for the protege.

B. Characteristics of a Mentor

Those individuals who were mentors seemed to have certain characteristics that enabled others to feel comfortable enough to enter into a work based relationship with them. Based on the interviewed participants, mentors possessed certain interpersonal skills, displayed professionalism, had legitimacy, and were knowledgeable. Most proteges described their mentor "as being outgoing and friendly." This enabled the mentor to build a good working relationship with a would-be protege. Being able to influence others and work effectively at all levels of management are key interpersonal skills that must be mastered in order to be successful within the organization. Given the unique nature of each organization, these traits cannot be fully acquired by direct observation. Instead, they are best developed and taught within the confines of a mentorship. Openness and candidness also help to develop relationships.

Professionalism manifested by "being comfortable enough with one's own career and willing to help others", is a critical trait for mentors. This trait includes the mentor's ability to handle any possible negative political ramifications associated with assisting others. Along the same line, mentors must be able to hold the protege to standard, to provide support when needed, and to publicly advocate for a protege's advancement.

In order for a mentor to be effective he or she must be perceived as a legitimate agent of the company. That is, a mentor must be a key person



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who is respected by his/her peers as well as management. Proteges looked for mentors who they felt "could help them advance" and who they "viewed as being successful". The reasoning behind this attraction was that if a person's mentor is successful hopefully by association the protege will also be successful. Longevity with the company and being positively viewed by others adds to the legitimacy of a mentor.

Being knowledgeable is another key characteristic that a mentor should possess. For a mentor to fulfill a teaching role he/she must know the political environment, understand acceptable behavior norms, and have insights into the organization. A mentor can help a protege by teaching and explaining performance expectations. A protege can draw on and benefit from a mentor's professional knowledge and expertise to solve problems. These characteristics all seem to describe someone who is looked up to for leadership. The combination of these traits is what attracts proteges to want to have a particular individual as a mentor.

## Chapter IV
## The Protege

### A. The Notion of a Protege

Proteges are more than just "side-kicks". They represent the future leadership within the organization. As proteges are developed and advanced in a company, they soon rise into positions that enable them to repeat the process. As this process is reiterated it serves as an informal means of succession planning. This being the case partially explains why minorities and women have such a difficult time progressing up the management ranks. Since mentors know they are grooming future leadership they will be extremely selective when identifying and developing proteges. A protege must have certain traits that make them attractive to mentors.

### B. Protege Characteristics

Mentors also look for certain characteristics in potential proteges. My research has shown that interpersonal skills, motivation, attitude and intelligence are important traits that mentors look for in aspiring proteges. Being able to listen, to establish good rapport with others, and to deal effectively with criticism are some skills crucial to success within an organization. A mentor would be able to develop and improve upon these skills.

Motivation as shown by a willingness to learn and to develop is important. Commitment to the job and willingness to work hard are traits that not only show motivation, but also give a positive indication that an individual is worth helping. A person's motivation is also expressed by showing a sincere interest in learning more about the company and the business.

Attitude is another important variable that mentors evaluate. The overriding and most dominant attitude that mentors looked for in a protege was his/her ability to accept challenges. If a person did not like or want to be challenged most mentors would not spend the time on that person as a protege. Along the same line, as a mentor and protege develop their relationship mutual reliability and seriousness test the resolve and commitment the two share. These expectations and attitudes are developed over time and are critical to the success of the relationship.

The final trait was intelligence. To warrant a mentor's time, a protege must be able to think independently, and be technically competent. Mentors look for individuals that are quick learners so that the maximum amount of teaching can be accomplished given the limited amount of time they may spent together. Being intelligent can help the mentor when working on various projects. Combining a mentor's experience with the protege mental keenness makes for a mutually beneficial relationship.

## Chapter V

## The Mentor/Protege Relationship

### A. The Starting of the Relationship

Those mentor/protege relationships that did develop came under what I call Optimum Conditions. Positive work experience, comfort level, mutually favorable impressions, and continued contact are all elements that make up Optimum Conditions. One mentor/protege relationship that typified how mentorships begin and are sustained occurred between a senior level controller and a junior level accountant. Working together on a special project served to bring a senior level manager in contact with a lower level professional. The primary basis at this stage of the relationship was the mutual need between the two parties. The controller was interested in exploring the financial impact of an overseas joint venture. The working arrangement was such that the controller set broad guidelines and it was up to the accountant to perform the needed analysis. Providing creative and intelligent solutions to the problem at hand helped in developing the positive experience. Further, the service which the accountant provided exceeded the controller's expectations. Still further, during this phase of the relationship the accountant always expressed a strong desire to learn not only about the financial implications, but also about the overall business. The controller helped the junior accountant by giving insight on how to obtain needed information from other high level executives. This not only provided the protege with needed exposure, but also gave the protege the opportunity to hone interpersonal skills. Frequent interaction enabled the protege to benefit from the senior manager's accounting experience. Thus far, the interaction between the two was positive. As the project went on, a greater interpersonal comfort level developed. At first, most conversations were business related. However, over time certain commonalities around sports and hobbies surfaced. These conversations served to bring the two closer together in other than a business context. As ideas were exchanged and philosophies discussed mutually favorable



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impressions were gained. The accountant valued the controllers advice and guidance and the controller viewed the accountant as a strong performer with potential. These impressions may have existed at the outset of the project, but working together reinforced them. As the bond between the two developed, the relationship moved toward one with less formal barriers of authority.

At the conclusion of the project, the controller thanked the accountant for his assistance and offered the accountant an opportunity to discuss other matters in the future. Subsequently, the accountant met with the controller on various occasions to exchange ideas, to get advice, and to obtain feedback on other projects. These meetings signaled the final Optimum Condition needed to establish the mentor/protege relationship.

Any number of reasons could explain why all working relationships do not evolve in a mentorship. An opportunity has to be created to bring two individuals together. After this, the onus is somewhat on the junior member to help the relationship along by meeting the requirements established by the boss and making efforts to sustain the relationship. This is done in various ways, which include returning to discuss non-work related issues, asking for feedback on other projects, and maintaining open communication lines. If, for some reason, the professional relationship sours the remaining Optimum Conditions will not develop. Without these conditions being present there is little chance that a full mentor/protege relationship will occur.

B. Other Mentor/Protege Relationships

There were two other types of mentor/protege relationships that I encountered. The first, subordinate/protege and the second, peer mentors, were not the traditional type relationships. In the subordinate/protege relationship a manager relied on an informal network of workers for help and assistance. This particular manager started her career with the company in the manufacturing operations area. Here, she

developed an excellent rapport with the workers and they befriended her. They frequently exchanged information both professional and personal. There was a great deal of mutual respect between the group and this manager. When she moved to another area of the company, she relied on her "network of little people" to help and to assist her. They functioned as her eyes and ears so she could anticipate problems. This relationship was beneficial to a point because these workers fulfilled, to a limited extent, some teacher type functions. However, they could not effectively function as a critic and advisor. This severely hampered the development of a full mentor/protege relationship.

The second type of relationship that developed was peer mentoring. That occurs when professionals at the same level help and assist one another. In these relationships, the teacher and advisor functions are mainly fulfilled. Because of the competitive nature of promotions and limited advancement opportunities the advisor and critic functions were not fully developed. Again, as in the case with subordinate mentoring the mentor relationship diminished. These two types of mentorships were aberrations. They seemed to fail because the relationships did not have the teaching, advising, and critic role being performed.

## Chapter VI

## Barriers for Minorities

## (White Females, Black Males and Females)

Barriers exist that prevent individuals from joining into mentor/protege relationships. White males seeking mentors do not seem to face the same barriers that females, black and white, and black males face. Some respondents felt that gender and race did not place any "real barriers" as long as one has the technical skills, good interpersonal skills, "liked" his or her job, and "was a good performer". Undoubtedly, these characteristics describe the ideal protege. However, if one possesses the aforementioned traits, then one may think it should be easy to attract a mentor and develop a good relationship. This does not necessarily hold true for females and blacks.

Before continuing the discussion an important observation must be made. Generally speaking, white females and black males face obstructions. Black females faced obstacles based on sex and race which made the mentoring process even more difficult for them. The barriers that females faced when trying to establish a cross-gender mentor/protege relationship include: cultural stereotyping, sexually based misunderstandings, and environmental barriers.

One female respondent stated that some potential mentors felt a "female's role was to be a wife at home with the kids". Further, the respondent believed that because of her sex she was being stereotyped in "the traditional subordinate role of women in society" (Noe, p. 69) and in turn was less likely to be picked as a protege. "Female proteges must make the first move and some may feel uncomfortable" in doing so, stated one female manager. Since females in our society are not socialized to be aggressive they may be more hesitant to approach someone for assistance. Without taking the first step females will not be able to develop meaningful mentorships. Other females interviewed encountered similar stereotyping. Specifically, one female manager was accused of being a "mother-hen" because she was assisting her subordinates too much.

This negative feedback not only reduced the manager's desire to continue to mentor but also confirms Noe's conclusion that socialization practices stereotype females as having greater "sensitivity for the feelings of others" (Noe, p. 69). Some male managers did not select female proteges because they felt that females do not posses the necessary characteristics needed for success. Research has shown that females have been stereotyped as lacking "leadership ability, competitiveness, self-confidence, aggressiveness and ambition"(Noe, p. 69). Unfortunately for females, these are critical skills that mentors look for when selecting proteges. Thus, cultural stereotyping poses obstacles for females in attracting and developing mentor/protege relationships.

In addition to stereotyping, sexually based misunderstandings hinder cross-gender mentoring. Mentoring a protege requires time and commitment. What may first start as a working relationship may develop into something more intimate over time. The consequences of this happening are serious for both the mentor and the protege. According to one senior female manager, some "females do not have the confidence to know the difference between affection and help". This misunderstanding may lead to a less than productive relationship. Further, most managers, both male and female, expressed concern that cross-gendering mentorships can lead to sexual liaisons. For this reason, they have opted to be cautious before entering into such a risky proposition. Raymond Noe writing in Academy of Management Review, summarizes this barrier by stating that:

> "Often, the relationship between the mentor and the protege is interpreted as sexual in nature leading to jealousy, resentment, and malicious gossip. Concerns about the public image of the relationship may cause male managers to avoid establishing mentorships with female employees because of the personal contact and frequent interactions regarding work tasks, problems and personal concerns that are required in such a relationship." (Raymond Noe, Academy of Management Review, vol. 13, pp., 70-71, 1988)

Environmental barriers included those things that females have very little control of but still must contend with. When attempting to identify a mentor, most of the female respondents believe there are not enough female mentors to help develop aspiring proteges. Females mentoring females would eliminate the disadvantages associated with cross-gender mentoring. However, with the short supply of available female mentors this is not a feasible alternative. Access to the company's informal network can help one come into contact with potential mentors. However, as one female manager put it "we do not have easy access to the network." Without access to these networks females reduce their chances of "having interactions with individuals in positions of power in the organization" (Noe, p. 67).

Another environmental factor that hinders cross-gender mentoring from occurring is the perceived limited potential of females within the organization. "Within our division there is a strict hierarchy - white males, black males, white females, and black females" is how one manager described the informal structure of the division. From my observation, this pecking order exists throughout changing only slightly in some areas. It may seem that females do not attract mentors because of the perception by the majority that they will only advance to a certain level. Because of this some "managers may avoid entering into a mentoring relationship with female employees" (Noe, p. 69).

Blacks face similar barriers to those of females when attempting to develop mentor relationships. Lack of available mentors and access to informal networks are common barriers confronting both females and minorities. One manager succinctly stated that the biggest barrier facing blacks are attributes of whites--their overall "comfort level with blacks, their generic racism, fear and/or distrust of cultural differences". These things make it harder to develop relationships. Expectations of blacks within the organization also make it difficult for them to develop mentorships. Potential proteges who are viewed as poor performers, lacking good business skills, and not having promise are often not chosen by a mentor. The difficulty for blacks is that the work



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environment is such that they are "expected to function without mistakes, to operate at near perfection". Working in such an environment against such odds makes it very difficult for a minority to become attractive to a mentor. Without this attraction a relationship will not develop.

Minority group self-hatred is another barrier that minorities face. Some successful minorities that are in a position to be a mentor opt not to mentor other minorities. In fact there is intense "competition among successful minorities within the organization". This may account for the reason that "blacks do not associate with one another informally and have a discomfort with discussing things". This form of behavior is characteristic of minority group self-hatred. This occurs when members of the out-group (minorities) share the poor opinions of themselves that the in-group, the successful minorities expresses (Epstein, p. 324). Successful blacks do not like or want to help other blacks because the successful blacks view
the non-successful blacks in the same negative light as whites.

Also, intraracial in-fighting not only prevented minorities from developing mentor/protege relationships, but also impeded their advancement within the company. There are two classifications that African Americans have for themselves. The first group is the Hardliners. This group wants to fight the system and hold on to their ethnicity at all costs. The Want-to-bes are those African Americans that strive to assimilate with the majority white population. The Want-to-bes do this hoping that eventually they will be selected for promotions and looked at more favorably than the Hardliners. The two groups are separate and distinct. There is no middle ground. As new minorities enter the company the two groups compete for the new members. This competition for new members hinders the solidarity of the minorities within the company. Also, it makes it difficult for would-be proteges from selecting a mentor for fear of alienating him or herself from one group or another. This intraracial barrier deserves more attention. However, it goes beyond the scope of this paper.

## Chapter VII

## Impacts of Mentoring

### A. Mentoring and Turnover

Mentoring and turnover are related. My findings seem to indicate that the absence of a mentor will increase turnover during the early stages of one's career with the organization. One key function that a mentor performs is assisting with assimilation to the organization. When a new employee enters a company and no one addresses his or her concerns, that employee may feel "abandoned, confused, frightened and helpless" (Buoncore, p. 5). An employee may react by resigning. One respondent stated that "mentoring speeds assimilation by teaching people how to function within the company's environment". Further, this process includes "educating new employees about the nuances of office politics, unwritten norms, and social customs".

Unlike white males, minorities and females face greater challenges when trying to assimilate into an unfamiliar corporate environment. Without a mentor who can assist with the indoctrination process females and minorities "are not given the same opportunity and are not plugged into the system". When individuals are made to feel a part of an organization maximum productivity is reached quicker, loyalty and company commitment is fostered and learning is more rapid (Bunocore, p. 7).

The importance that a mentor plays when helping a protege to adjust to and become a part of a new organization can help reduce turnover among newly hired employees.

In addition to new hires, mentors can also influence turnover during the early stages of a person's career beyond the initial assimilation phase. Again, it is the absence of a mentor that adversely impacts turnover. This occurs in various ways. Having a mentor during the promotion process is the first example that will be examined. In a company such as the one in this study one gets promoted by manager's

feedback during man-power audits or some other means. Once discussions start regarding the promotability of individuals those without mentors are already left behind. One possible reason for this is that mentors can "provide the necessary public advocacy needed to secure promotions" for their proteges.

Public advocacy is not limited just to promotion oriented meetings. Mentors can serve as press agents, so to speak, for their protege. As favorable comments are spread throughout the company about a particular person this enhances his or her reputation. Also, these positive comments can insulate the protege from negative, possibly damaging criticisms when mistakes are committed. With this insulation and publicly proclaimed accomplishments, a mentor enhances a protege's exposure. This exposure creates opportunities that those without mentors do not realize. Hence, having a mentor can help in getting promoted. Those without a public advocate may not see promotions as quickly as their mentored peers. This lack of growth and stymied professional development may influence people to leave an organization because of the perceived inability to get ahead.

Frustration with informal company mechanisms, lack of a clear understanding about performance expectations, and feelings of professional insecurity or competence are all things that employees feel at one time or another. Depending on the frequency of these factors one may opt to leave a company in order to remedy that particular situation. Proteges can turn to their mentors for an explanation of company idiosyncracies that do not seem to make sense. Having gained a better understanding about the "why" of a company's operation may help ease the frustration that one undergoes. Without clear expectations employees are left to guess what is and what is not acceptable. A mentor can provide valuable feedback to the protege on how best to meet expectations. This can relieve stress and enable the employee to channel his or her energy in the most efficient and effective manner.

When a person is learning a new job or takes on new responsibilities

there is an associated feeling of uncertainty. Before the feelings reach a dysfunctional level, mentors can bolster a protege's confidence by reassuring him or her. Providing this type of emotional support was considered invaluable by those who had been mentored during their career. Thus, having a mentor or support system may prevent a employee from leaving when the preponderance of environmental factors seems overwhelming.

To continue, one respondent felt that "turnover is a function of developing good working relationships". The more positive relationships one develops the better one can function within an organization. A large part of routine business deals with exchanging information, influencing others, and presenting ideas.

As an employee progresses within an organization and interacts with all levels of management one establishes or fails to establish creditability. This in turn affects the quality of relationships. A mentor can give advice on how best to nurture work interactions, said a respondent. More importantly, "a mentor can intercede to resolve conflicts" that may arise.

The cost associated with recruiting an individual represents a substantial investment on the part of the company. So keeping good performing employees is in the company's best interest. Mentors can keep strong performing employees with the company by being an effective coach. Ideally a mentor can quickly close "the performance gap between the actual and the desired level of performance" (Concilio, p. 19). Closing this gap greatly improves an individuals performance. Working closely with his or her mentor, a protege can be given additional growth opportunities in one's present job and be prepared for advancement within the company. These things tend to keep strong performers with the company.

The mentoring process also creates opportunities for new and innovative ideas to be introduced into the company. Michael Zey writes

in the January 1988 issue of Personnel Journal that "nurturing and exchange of ideas between the two partners also acts as a catalyst for new ideas". This innovation is invaluable especially in the research and development areas. For example, as senior scientists mentor younger researchers entering the company the latter's ideas can be combined with the former's expertise so that not only will new ideas be developed but also they will reach the appropriate levels of management.

Chapter VIII

Boss vs Mentor

Boss vs Mentor

My research has shown that some differences exist between the relationship a protege has with his or her boss and the one that is shared with the mentor. One normally does not have a choice as to who his or her boss will be and must be flexible to make the relationship work. However, a mentor/protege relationship usually begins voluntarily as both parties are geared toward it's development. A boss must evaluate an employee's potential, monitor performance and regulate compensation. These functions may put the subordinate on his/her "best behavior" when dealing with a boss. Moreover, one may not ask as many questions of or share incompetencies with one's boss for fear that these may adversely affect one's progress with the company.

Thus, in a boss/subordinate relationship there may be less openness for fear the boss may penalize the employee during evaluations or performance appraisals for perceived incompetence. This is not the case in a mentor/protege relationship. There seems to be more trust and openness in this relationship. One reason is that the protege does not have to worry about being evaluated by the mentor. This, in turn, opens up communication lines and builds trust between the two. In contrast, boss must be careful to avoid appearances of favoritism when handling many direct reports. Because the boss may have to spread his/her time out evenly, meeting with one's boss becomes a formal and arranged endeavor.

Normally, this is not the case in mentor/protege relationships. Mentors who have multiple proteges may face the same time constraints as the boss with numerous employees. Mentors seem also willing to set time aside to meet with their proteges. That was accomplished by meeting after work or during an activity that both enjoy. Overall, the meeting times were less formal than meetings with their boss. A boss assigns



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tasks and is concerned mainly with results. The boss may not take the time to explain how to begin or complete a project. When a protege brings a problem or project to his/her mentor for help, there is more of a teaching or helping type interaction. Also, mentors can provide input about different individuals and suggest ways to deal with difficult people he may come in contact with while completing a project.

Thus, differences do exist between boss/subordinate and mentor/protege relationships. The purpose of this section was not to prove that a boss cannot be a mentor for a subordinate, but just to clarify the differences between the two relationships.

## Chapter IX

## Conclusion

The importance of mentors within an organization is quite clear based on the pertinent literature as well as on the findings of this study. However, given the requirements needed for the "ideal" mentor/protege relationship one must come to the realization that not every person entering an organization will be able to have a mentor. While understanding this an organization must still attempt to address the problems that a dearth of mentors may cause.

A mentor serves particular roles within an organization. These roles when performed well will help those individuals with mentors. The three most important roles are teacher, advisor, and critic. Not every person has traits that can qualify him or her as a mentor. Good interpersonal skills, professionalism, and legitimacy are some hallmarks of a good mentor. Most of all, mentors should display exemplary leadership skills.

Those individuals seeking a mentor must make themselves as attractive as possible. This can be done in part by exhibiting motivation, having good interpersonal skills, and being fairly intelligent. Optimum Conditions must be present in order for mentor/protege relationships to fully develop. Having continued contact after the conclusion of a work assignment or when formal interaction has ended signals the start of a genuine mentorship. Racism, sexism, and other prejudices pose barriers for minorities and females when they try to attract a mentor. The shortage of available mentors is another impediment that limits the number of mentorships among minorities. Intraracial in-fighting exacerbates the problem that a shortage of available mentors creates. Generally speaking, mentors did have some impact on turnover within the company. Mentors were able to influence proteges to stay by helping them assimilate, offering encouragement, and providing help when needed. The boss and the mentor have similar roles and functions. However, the difference between the two lie in the manner and diligence that the different roles require.

## Chapter IIX

## Recommendations

My recommendation has following three parts: 1) orientation seminars for newly hired employees, 2) seminars for management, and 3) an improved performance appraisal systems. Having the organization function as a surrogate mentor is the premise for my recommendation. When new employees enter the organization more effort must be given to ensure that the assimilation process has, at least, started. When groups of professionals join the organization an orientation seminar should be provided. This seminar will also help the formation of a support peer group. The purpose of the group will be to share concerns, doubts, and feelings about the new environment. An advisor may be selected and appointed to guide the group and be there to address any concerns that arise. Advisors will be volunteers who meet the characteristics of the ideal mentor discussed previously. The classes will be informally structured. However, the purpose of the seminar should be to produce an employee who understands the political environment, unwritten norms, performance expectations and other job related essentials. Once the person completes the "basic training", so to speak, he/she will not be required to attend additional classes. The incentive for advisors will be additional compensation in the form the advisor chooses. The exact compensation will be determined, in each case for participation in the program.

The next step that needs to be taken centers around enlightened management. Managing diversity and other training must be given to managers regardless of the number of years a person has been managing. The crux and purpose of the training should be to enable managers to deal with perceived cultural differences. This covers not only gender differences, but racial ones as well. Managers should also develop traits that require them to become an effective mentor. This would help them understand what it takes to become a mentor and hopefully increase the number of available mentors. There is the need to provide basic supervisory and leadership skills for managers who are newly appointed

too. Upper management must also strengthen their training on how to deal with an increasingly culturally diverse workforce. The purpose of the training is to remove some of the barriers that prevent mentor/protege relationships from developing.

Performance evaluations must be modified, too. New employees must be measured against specific performance standards mutually agreed upon by both parties, but, of course, set throughout the company. Written into job standards should be opportunities for employees to get exposure to management vertically and horizontally. Also, managers should be responsible for working with newly hired employees, with at least one project that is expected to be presented to upper management. Written in performance appraisals for managers should be a development function. That is, managers should be compensated for the promotability their of employees.

This three pronged approach should help serve as mentoring function for employees. Implementation of a mentor program must be done incrementally and over time. Senior level management must embrace the idea and be committed to the change or the program will not succeed.

**APPENDIX A**

## RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

| RACE | GENDER | POSITION |
|---|---|---|
| B | M | Financial Controller |
| B | M | Group Manager |
| B | M | Director |
| B | M | Regional Manager |
| B | M | Group Manager |
| W | F | Director |
| W | F | Group Manager |
| W | F | Director |
| W | F | Director |
| B | F | Director |
| B | F | Group Manager |
| B | F | Group Manager |
| B | F | Group Manager |
| W | M | Group Manager |
| W | M | Group Manager |
| W | M | Senior Executive |
| W | M | Senior Executive |

**APPENDIX B - QUESTIONS USED IN PILOT STUDY**

Introduction:

1. This is study about mentoring and is part of master's research.
2. All information will be confidential, (no names, positions, company will be produced in connection with this project).
3. I'll ask questions about your background and about mentor/protege relationships.

Participant's Background:

1. Current position? How long?
2. Responsibilities?
3. Number of direct reports?
4. Number of years with Johnson & Johnson
5. Career-background position

History:

1. How would you define the term mentor?
2. How would you define the term protege?
3. Do you have a mentor(s)?

3a. How did your relationship with your mentor begin? What brought you and your mentor together: Was it your position? Mentor's?

3b. What do you have in common with your mentor?

3c. Did you actively seek out a mentor? Why? How was the relationship maintained?

3d. What characteristics did you look for in a mentor?

3e. How many levels separate you from your mentor?

3f. What feelings did you experience when your mentor started mentoring you?

3g. Why do you think you chose your mentor?

3h. Please describe some of your personality characteristics and compare and contrast them with your mentor?

3i. What professional qualities doe your mentor possess that you admire?

3j. How did you attract your mentor?

**APPENDIX B - QUESTIONS USED IN PILOT STUDY (CONT'D)**

History:(cont'd)

4. Do you currently have a protege? Do you mentor someone?
4a. How did your relationship with your protege begin?
4b. What brought you and your protege together?
4c. What was your protege's position?
4d. Did your protege seek you out or did you select him/her? If you selected, why?
4e. Why did your protege choose you?
4f. What did you look for in a protege?
4g. What attracted you to your protege?

Advantages

1. Do you think having a mentor makes a difference in one's career?
2. What has a mentor done for your career?
3. How important has a mentor been to you?
4. What have you gained most from the relationship you have with your mentor?
5. How successful do you think you would have been without your mentor?
6. How much coaching does your mentor provide for you?
7. What part did your mentor play in your advancement within the company?
8. How has your mentor helped you overcome obstacles? What kind?
9. How much time do you spend with your mentor?
10. How far do you expect your mentor to take you?
11. What benefits have you derived from your mentor?
12. What has your mentor taught you?
13. How has your mentor provided emotional support and personal guidance?
14. What expectations does your mentor have of you?
15. What does your mentor get from the relationship?
16. How has the relationship with your mentor changed over time?
17. How long do you expect it to last?



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**APPENDIX B - QUESTIONS USED IN PILOT STUDY (CONT'D)**

Miscellaneous

1. Under what conditions would you break your relationship with your mentor?
2. Please compare the relationship you have with your boss with the one you have with your mentor?
3. How do you resolve conflict with your mentor?
4. What barriers do you see females having in establishing a mentor/protege relationship? How do you overcome them?
5. What barriers do you see minorities having in establishing a mentor/protege relationship? How do you overcome them?
6. Why did you get involved as a mentor?
7. What relationship do you think exist between turnover and mentoring?

## APPENDIX C - OMITTED QUESTIONS

Some questions were omitted from the study because they were redundant. For example, question 3j and 3a under the "History" category were identical. Also, question 1 and 2 under the "Advantages" category seemed to be variations of the same questions. Data from these questions yielded similar responses.

Other questions were omitted because the response frequency was not great enough to warrant inclusion and to form significant conclusions. Specifically, under the "Miscellaneous" section questions 1 and 3 only had three responses. This being the case they were not included. Omitting questions did not affect the study to any great degree.

**APPENDIX D - MENTOR'S ROLE**

Teacher Role:

1. Knowledge of social and political structure, norms, assimilation
2. Insight on how business works
3. Decision making skills
4. Negotiating skills
5. Interpersonal skills
6. Teach about corporate culture

Advisor Role:

1. How to resolve political confrontations
2. Advise on how to resolve conflict with peers and boss
3. Style and presentation pointers
4. Act as a sounding board for ideas
5. Can provide input on career moves

Critic Role:

1. Public Advocator
2. Performance evaluation
3. Give feedback on how to be successful
4. Point out what is important and what is not important

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